

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NASSAU 01433 292328Z

60

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 EB-07

SIL-01 LAB-04 COME-00 AID-05 /074 W

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R 292041Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY NASSAU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7159

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV BF

SUBJ: MINISTER OF WORKS RESIGNS

1. SIMEON BOWE, MINISTER OF WORKS AND UTILITIES, HAS RESIGNED HIS CABINET POST BECAUSE OF THE YEAR-OLD PVC PIPE SCANDAL. IN A STATEMENT READ TO THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY ON AUGUST 27, BOWE SAID THAT HE KNEW THERE WAS BLAME TO BE ATTACHED TO HIS MINISTRY AND THAT AS THE PERSON CONSTITUTIONALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THAT MINISTRY HE WAS THE PERSON TO ACCEPT THE BLAME. BOWE HAS BEEN UNDER STEADILY INCREASING CRITICISM FROM THE FNM AS WELL AS GROWING PRESSURE FROM HIS OWN PLP TO RESIGN BECAUSE OF THE SCANDAL.

2. THE PIPES WERE ORDERED THROUGH A MIAMI PURCHASING AGENT, ONESCO INTERNATIONAL CORPORATION, JANUARY 1974 AT A COST FAR IN EXCESS OF WHAT THEY WOULD HAVE COST IF ORDERED ELSEWHERE (APPROXIMATELY DOLS 250,000 MORE). THE PIPES REMAINED ON THE NASSAU DOCK FOR OVER EIGHT MONTHS UNTIL THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AGREED TO PAY DOLS 263,340 FOR THEM INSTEAD OF THE ORIGINAL DOLS 350,000.

3. THE ORDERING OF THE PIPES THROUGH ONESCO WAS A SUBJECT OF INVESTIGATION BY BAHAMAS POLICE, INTERPOL, THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE, AND FINALLY THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

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PAGE 02 NASSAU 01433 292328Z

4. EMBASSY COMMENT: ALTHOUGH BOWE STATED THAT HE WOULD CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PLP, IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN IF HE WILL DO SO OR RATHER FULFILL HIS REPORTED THREAT TO "BLOW THE WHISTLE" ON OTHERS IF FORCED TO RESIGN. BOWE'S RESIGNATION SHOULD STRENGTHEN THE GOVERNMENT -- BOWE HAS LONG BEEN A BONE OF CONTENTION BOTH WITHIN AND WITHOUT THE PLP -- AND ALLOW THE KEY MINISTRY OF WORKS TO BEGIN FUNCTIONING IN A NORMAL WAY AGAIN. IF, HOWEVER, BOWE DOES TRY TO BRING OTHERS DOWN WITH HIM, IT COULD SERIOUSLY DIVERT AND EVENTUALLY WEAKEN THE GOVERNMENT BY FORCING IT TO CONTINUE TO FOCUS ON PARTY SCANDALS RATHER THAN ITS URGENT ECONOMIC AND DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONS, E.G. THE CRITICAL WATER SITUATION IN NEW PROVIDENCE, UNEMPLOYMENT, ETC. IF THE LATTER SHOULD OCCUR, THE FNM WILL UNDOUBTEDLY PROFIT BY IT. TO WHAT EXTENT IT WOULD PROFIT DEPENDS ON HOW MANY AND HOW BIG THE BOMBSHELLS BOWE DROPS AND ON HOW MUCH CREDIBILITY IS GIVEN TO HIM AND HIS CHARGES. U.S. GOVERNMENT INTEREST SHOULD NOT BE PREJUDICED IN EITHER EVENT. WESSIS

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